

## 5.23.2008 - Chairman Rahall Delivers Speech Warning Against Dangers of Ethanol Mandate

U.S. Representative Nick J. Rahall, D-WV, on Friday, spoke at the City Club of Cleveland where he declared the rush to food-based ethanol a faulty energy policy that is contributing to worldwide hunger and dangerous international unrest.

"Let them eat ethanol" — to paraphrase Marie Antoinette during the food riots in 18th Century France — simply will not do," said Rahall. "If our government, and governments around the world, cannot find better solutions to rising gasoline prices than those that exacerbate the growing food crisis, perhaps policymakers deserve no better fate than that suffered by Ms. Antoinette."

The City Club is billed as the longest uninterrupted forum series in the country and prides itself in a tradition of debate and discussion. Past speakers have included Franklin D. Roosevelt, George Bush, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter, Dick Cheney, Henry Louis Gates, Madeleine Albright, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Sandra Day O'Connor, and Douglas MacArthur.

In his speech, Rahall recognized that, in recent years, corn-based biofuels seemed to offer independence from foreign oil. But numerous studies and recent news articles have faulted the conversion to fuel production of farmlands and foods that were previously used for human consumption for exacerbating rising food prices and food shortages.

"Corn-based ethanol has helped to create a food-versus-fuel dilemma," Rahall said. "Although this notable ethanol drawback has been playing out most dramatically in foreign lands — largely developing nations, where the margin between survival and starvation is slimmest — it is also showing up, ominously, in the shopping carts of American working families. And it is coming at a most inopportune time, when our economy is badly faltering."

Providing data about how food prices have risen steeply in recent months and are hitting the budgets of American families, Rahall argued that America's dependence on foreign oil cannot come via switching from one fuel addiction to another, nor from ignoring those mainstay fuels — including coal, oil, and gas — that comprise the greatest part of America's energy portfolio. But with the price of oil ringing in at record-high \$135 per barrel yesterday, Rahall noted that it is clear our Nation's current energy policy is only placing a heavier burden on American families and the domestic economy.

"America's energy security will come in the form of a comprehensive energy plan that boosts efficiency, invests in a wide variety of fuel alternatives — including advanced fossil fuel technologies like coal-to-liquids that address emissions — and respects the complex interconnections of a worldwide economy, while taking into account how

tinkering with energy fads can wreak worldwide havoc," Rahall said.

Rahall also noted that claims about the environmental benefits of ethanol production are now being revisited. He cited studies by Princeton University, and the University of Minnesota and the Nature Conservancy, which have found increased greenhouse gas emissions resulting from ethanol production, as well as a loss of forests and grasslands that have served as "carbon sinks."

In addition, Rahall noted that food-based ethanol is not providing the kind of security that many proponents had touted because of the food shortages that are causing unrest in so many young and fragile democracies.

"As we watch violence erupt from corner to corner around the globe, we see that the growth of the ethanol industry is spreading the kind of instability that draws American money and military might into foreign lands, rather than securing the peace that would bring our troops home.

"The rush into ethanol has been a serious misstep. We had better look carefully before we leap again," said Rahall.

Rahall serves as the Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Department of the Interior and energy development on federal lands, and as the Vice Chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.